History of the town of Bradford

Oct. 1896

[1] Mud Lake was once the center of an Indian Settlement, & the first white man who existed near our present village of Bradford, was a hunter by the name of Saml. Groovendyke. He occupied a cave & hut combined near the farm-house now owned by Cyrus Munson. In 1793 Frederick Bartles & John Harvey came from N. Jersey & located on the outlet of Mud Lake, at a place afterward called "Bartles Hollow" in the wilderness of Jersey. Under the patronage of Col. Williamson of Bath Frederick Bartles erected a flouring-mill & saw-mill in 1795. While the men were employed building the mills a hunter by the name of Benjamin Patterson (a cousin of Daniel Boone of Kentucky) was hired [2] to supply them with meat at $2.00 per day, & the skins from the animals. In three months he killed 100 deer & several bear, & a man named Brocher slayed as many more. The Mill-Pond then covered a 1000 acres & was filled with fish of various kinds. Mr. Bartles was a German, an intelligent, generous, hospitable man, & he often entertained parties of pleasure during the fishing season, free of cost, in the best style. "Bartles Hollow" in those days was the center of the County & a place of great importance.

Mud Creek at this time was navigable, & through it lumber & grain were rafted to Baltimore. In 1798 Mr. Bartles rafted 100,000 feet of boards from his mill to Baltimore. In 1800 the [3] following record was made by the County Clerk - "This 4th day of Apr. 1800, started from the mill of Fred. Bartles, two ark's, one built by Col. Williamson of Bath, 72 feet long & 15 feet wide, the other by Nathan Harvey 71 feet long & 15 feet wide. After passing down Mud Creek safely into the Cohocton, they were conducted on to Baltimore".

Mud Creek has failed since the clearing of the forests, & now the produce of the Lake Country resorts to R. Roads. The flouring-mill built by Mr. Bartles stood on the site now owned by Munson Bros. Henry Switzer came from N. Jersey in 1800. He was two days coming from Savona to what is now known as Bradford. Mr. Switzer carried [4] the first mail, & continued the supervision of them for 24 years. He also brought the first clover-seed into the town from Geneva, paying $40.00 per bushel. He reared a large family & his son John was a soldier in the war of 1812, & his great-grand-son John C. Switzer, with other members of the family stand prominent with the best interests of our town. Our leading physician, Dr. S. M. Switzer, is also great-grand-son of this old pioneer, his branch being from William, a son of Henry Switzer.

Joshua & Barzilla King were "Tompkins Co. Kings". The first carpenters in this county, were employed by Mr. Bartles in building his mill & store. Joshua King afterward went to Michigan. His wife was a fine rider on horse-back, & had the pleasure of having riden the horse on which Gen. Harrison directed his battle at Tippecanoe in Indiana. Barzilla King remained here & his wife was Catherine Switzer, who came to "Jersey" with her father Henry Switzer in 1800. Mr. King had [5] two sons & several daughters. His son Nelson King now living in Bradford, one of its most respected citizens. In 1805 Michael Scott & Thomas Rowles came from Maryland & settled on farms about a mile south of the village of Bradford. Mr. Scott on the farm now occupied by his grand-son of the same name. He was one of the first black-smiths, & experienced the life common to a pioneer, surrounded by wild beasts & Indians. On one occasion a bear chased his hogs to the house. Another time, after his wifes death, he being away, his two little children were alone, & Indians took possession of his house. They turned three of their horses loose near his barn, & scattered [6] hay for them. During the night Mr. Scotts cattle gored one of their horses, & it died. When Mr. Scott returned in company with Thomas Corbitt, the dusky savages gathered around a blazing fire, & said to him "You pay all." The Indians laid their case before Squire Bartles who told them he could not entertain it, & referred them to Samuel Haight of Bath. While Mr. Haight was making out the papers, Thomas Corbitt entered the office & gave a true version of the case, & the legal proceedings were at once stopped. Contrary to our general impression of the tribe, to always hold a grudge, these Indians were always friendly & often visited Mr. Scott & enjoyed his hospitality. Thomas Rowles by hard [7] labor soon made an opening in the heavy timber, & erected a house some distance east of Mr. Scott. In 1815 Henry Axtel came from Binghamton, & located on the farm now known as the Decker farm. His son Henry was a successful farmer & business man, at one time conducting a store, where our townsman D. Osgood now lives. Mr Axtel at his death possessed five hundred acres of land with numerous children & grand-children to do him honor.

Capt. John N. Hight came here a century ago, & cleared the farms now owned by George & Benjamine Hedges. David

his brother cleared & settled on the farm now owned by James Longwell. David Hight killed the first [8] panther & the first bear in the town on the Caleb Hedges farm. Mr Hedges came from Cameron & bought this farm in 1838. His son William has been a merchant here for several years, & his grand-son's still in active business are Frank Hedges son of William, & Zimmerman Bros. sons of Mrs. Jacob Zimmerman formerly Catherine Hedges.

John Zimmerman was one of our most prominent pioneers. He was born in Austria, & at the age of sixteen was taken from his bed at night, secured with irons & forced into the Military Service of Austria. In that service he was taken prisoner by the French, & again, under Napoleon, was taken prisoner by the English & [9] sent to Canada, where he found an opportunity to escape to the United States. Being sent out to look for a deserter, who held the office of Corporal, he with Jacob Swartz slipped over into this State. "Still looking for the Corporal." From the Col. Comd'g. at Buffalo, he received a certificate to show that he was a deserter from the British Army, & after passing Canandagua, would be at liberty to engage in business within 100 miles of the frontier. He made his way through deep woods to the settlement in Jersey, Sept. 1814 & engaged as distiller with Frederick Bartles. After a service of seven months, he went to Lancaster Pa. intending to return to his native Austria. But [10] learning that affairs in his old home were still unsettled, he remained in Lancaster with a good degree of prosperity. In 1824 he returned to "Jersey" with his wife & two children, having married in Lancaster. The oldest of these children was Jacob the father of our present townsmen Zimmerman Bros. Before Mr Zimmerman bought the farm near here, Dougal Cameron of Bath offered him what is now the Wilkes farm in Bath, for $2.50 per acre. However he bought the farm now owned by Harvey Givens, for $5.00 per acre, as this was the center of the County, & this "Bartles Hollow" was to be the County Seat. The first substantial [11] frame house was built by John Zimmerman, & now occupied in good repair, by Harvey Giveans. Daniel Bartholomew one of our early settlers came from Lancaster Pa. On his way to Seneca County, when he reached the Mud Creek valley, his family were taken with chills & fever, & he was obliged to stop. He erected a rude cabin & began clearing, finally remained on these lands during his life, & his descendants still occupy the same. He was a Revolutionary Soldier, & his son Daniel served in the war of 1812. Charles Whitehead settled in this town in 1827. His son Benjamine, married Sarah Bevier. For their wedding trip, he took his wife & all their [12] worldly goods on a wagon & drove to Michigan, which was then very far west. The first night after they reached their destination, his wife said to him, "You must not unpack our modest outfit, for I will never live in this State." of course they at once returned, & he is now the owner of 300 acres of the best land just outside our village limits, & his sons are among our most industrious citizens. Isaac Little was born in N. Jersey in 1793. He came to this town in 1822 & carried on the business of a general store, where the Baptist rectory now stands. His father Benjamine Little who died here was a Revolutionary soldier in the Office of Capt. Mr Isaac Little was highly respected [13] & his only son bearing the same name, & one daughter, Mrs. King, are worthy residents of our village. Abel Eveland settled at the foot of Oak Hill in 1830. He held the office of Justice for eight years & served a term in the State Assembly. His son Alonzo is one of our lawyers & has been supervisor. Two sons are Bankers in Mayvill Michigan. William S. Knapp our oldest citizen at the present time, was born in Warwick N. York in 1814. When a boy he came to Yates Co. with his father, & in 1836 he married Emily Crane of Barrington, & began his new life in Bradford. Two of their sons died in the Civil War, & one is now a druggist in Rochester. Mr Knapp an "old time Democrat," has been a strong [14] Republican, ever since the party was organized. In 1834 the first house of worship was erected & called the Jersey Baptist Church. That denomination still occupy the same building on the same site. The mills & lumber interest passed from Frederick Bartles to Frank Whitney & about this time the name was changed from "Bartles Hollow" to Bradford, in honor of William Bradford, who was born in Phila. in 1755 & died in 1795, an officer in the Revolution, & appointed Gen. by our first President Washington. In 1836 Hiram Merriman whose ancestors date from Conn. came from Elbridge N. York to Bradford where he entered into active [15] lumber & milling business. The same year he married Adeliza Munson of Saratoga, & brought her to this, then wild country, by canal-boat to Olmstead's Landing, now Keuka, & from there in rude wagon to John Zimmermans, where they boarded for one year. In 1837 ---- Cameron came from Warrensburg N. York & entered into partnership with Jesse Munson of Saratoga, & Hiram Merriman. In 1840 they built over the Bartles Mill, & after a few years Cameron retired from the firm & started a mill down the Creek, in company with James Thurman who was from Troy N. York. This Mill later on was called Platts Mills, & George Patterson an Uncle of Mrs Chas. Whitehead [16] had a store there, & together with "Cameron & Thurman" owned the land now occupied by Alonzo & Isaac Eveland. The name of "Platts Mills" was from a very respectable & intelligent colored family who lived near these Mills. This firm of Cameron Thurman & Patterson went to Troy N. York after seven or eight years, & they are about the only ones mentioned in this history, who have no descendants still living in this village, or very near. Jesse Munson was born in Vt. in 1792. He was of Scandinavian extraction but coming down through England & the early days of the Conn. Colony, he possessed the marked N. England traits of resolution, force, & directness of purpose. In 1837 [17] Mr Munson with Hiram Merriman purchased

extensive timber lands both here & in Penna. Mr Merrimans share of the land here has since been cultivated into smoothe farming, & is now owned by his grandson W. E. C. Merriman who is also active in the lumber interest of Merriman & Merriman Williamsport Pa. In 1838 Jesse Munson moved his family from Saratoga into the house where Albert Dodge now lives. But soon after, they changed into the old "Munson Residence" built & occupied by Frank Whitney. The frame to this house stood near the mouth of the Glen & Frank Whitney moved it in place & completed it for a dwelling. Under Mr Munsons [18] management & with the work of his own hands, lumbering & farming were carried on with energy, & many an acre of forest gave way to cleared fields, now owned by his two grandsons Jesse & Cyrus Munson, leading business men of our village & town. In early life a Presbyterian, he contributed support to all the religious efforts & finally built St Andrews Church in 1866 & 7. Through his efforts, with Mr Merriman, the "Little Academy" was built at the mouth of the Glen, & maintained some of the most competent teachers, whose earnest work, sent out several Clergyman & to benefit the world at large. [19] Rufus & Edgar Munson sons of Jesse Munson, were associated with him in business, during his life time. Rufus who built, & lived, in the house Charles Ide now owns, died at the age of fifty two, a young man. His sons are "Munson Bros." Edgar has been from here several years but is an active man, every day at his office, in Williamsport Pa. where he has an extensive lumber business & coal interests. He was born in 1820. John Mitchell, an Englishman came to this country in the early days. he lived near what was called Pine Creek, now in the town of Orange, where Mr Howe now lives. He possessed a two-seated covered carriage, English style, & always wore gloves, an [20] adornment very rare in those days. His son John B. entered into a lumber business with John Wright, buying out the property owned by John Zimmerman in 1848. But before this transaction he built the store now occupied by C. Munson & also a store & saw-mill at Wayne, expecting to raft logs to that point through the Lakes. It was an expensive venture & the whole property in both towns was bought in by Jesse Munson. During this time Munson & Merriman had occupied the old Store on the bank of the creek, built by Mr Bartles, the wall running up from the waters edge, & long conductors running out from its side to carry grain into the arks, which conveyed it to the [21] ocean & large cities southward. Mrs John B. Mitchell was the daughter of Henry A. Townsend an Englishman who came to Bath N. York in 1800. He was associated with Gov. Clinton & Tompkins, & a member of the State Legislature in 1809. The first paper-mill in this county was erected by him & a manufactory of woolen goods carried on at Cold Spring. Mrs Mitchell was also cousin of Mrs Cruger, wife of Gen. Cruger a highly accomplished woman. John B. Mitchell had three sons & three daughters. His oldest son Hobart was one of the first to go into the far west among the Rocky Mts. & mining country. He was on board the Golden Gate off Cal. when it went down, & [22] rescued a little child which was washed ashore from the wreck. For some days he kept the child alive on herb tea, & finally restored it to its grand-parents in Chicago, the parents having been lost in the wreck. Hobart Mitchell is now in the Black Hill Country. Henry A. died in N. York City & Thomas the youngest son, died from exposure as prisoner in our Civil War.

W. E. Crane was born in Carmel N. York in 1813. He came with his father to Yates Co. when 18 years of age. In 1839 he married Hannah Morse of that County & began life near Dundee. In 1841 he moved to what was then the old town of Bradford, but now Orange two miles east of Bradford. He changed his residence to this village in 1873, retiring from active farm life, which he had made very successful, by always "doing to-day what could be done" not waiting to see if to-morrow would do as well. He was a strong Presbyterian & Abolitionist. He served as deacon in the Church at Tyrone for over forty years, & as long as his strength allowed, he attended that Church five miles away. His wife was of Puritan stock in Conn. & grand-daughter of [22b] Capt. Willard Child, also a cousin once removed to S. F. B. Morse, the inventor of the telegraph. Mr & Mrs Crane died within a year of each other, she in 1889 & he in 1890. One child survives them Mrs G. C. Merriman, & two grand-children, W. E. C. Merriman of Williamsport & Mrs A. C. M. Quigley of Bellefonte.

[23] The first merchant in our town was Frederick Bartles, the first doctor Peter Rose. The first child born John Bosenbark, & the wife of Thomas Rowles, the first person buried in our cemetery. Mr Bartles was also buried there & near him his servant the first colored man in the town. The first school-building was a log house on the flat back of the present site of the King House. In 1815 a log School-house was built, ceiled to the rafters, on the side hill back of the Stettler lot. Thomas Sanford came from N. Jersey in 1800. One of his daughters was the wife of Thomas Corbett the pioneer. His grandson, Thomas, one of our citizens, served through the Civil [24] war, & his great-grand-son Edgar M. Sanford is associated in the mercantile business with Frank Hedges. He has also served as Town Clerk for two terms, & is a credit to his ancestor. Francis Yawger was a pioneer of "Jersey." He left this town however, & went to Cayuga Co. where his son Henry was born in 1800. This son came to "Bartles Hollow" in his early years, where he married Nancy Scott daughter of our early pioneer Michael Scott. He was a very active man & his sons are industrious useful

townsmen. His son Philip Yawger has served three terms as Supervisor & owns the farm he assisted his father in clearing so many years ago.

[25] John Longwell came from the North of Ireland, & settled in Stonington Conn. His son David was a farmer in Carmel N. York & his grand-son James, born in Carmel, married & moved to N. Jersey. The oldest of thirteen children born to James, was our much respected townsmen, Hosea Longwell born in 1811. When about ten years old, he came to Urbana with his father, & in 1832 married Harriet Brundage daughter of John Brundage & sister of Mrs Dugal Cameron, all of this County. Hosea Longwell came to Bradford in 1841 where he was a prominent citizen for over fifty years. His children are among our best people, as regards Christian duty & agricultural improvement.

[26] William Gilmore was born in Hector N. York in 1803. In 1824 he came to the town of Bath, just over our border. There he purchased a farm, cleared the land, built a log house & then went back to look for his wife. Their wedding-trip brought them to this new home the groom had so industriously prepared. This farm is now owned by his grand-son Charles Gilmore. Mr Gilmore was one of the founders of South Bradford Baptist Church, & served as deacon for many years. His children & grand-children are worthy inhabitants of that part of our town known as South Bradford.

[27] The first clearing on Oak Hill in the south part of the town, was made by John Shriner. The village of South Bradford is built on the highest land in the town, & Joel Halleck cleared ten acres where the Baptist Church & a store now stand. The first frame house was built on John Havens farm & Mr Havens was the first Justice in that part of the town & where his son Dewitt Havens now lives. His grand-son Frank Havens is the present Supervisor of the town of Bradford & employed in Cyrus Munsons Store. He is also a land owner in the south part of the town. The first frame barn was built on Ephraim Bennetts farm. Mr Bennett who is still living [28] was one of the first deacons of the Baptist Church & still fills that office. He has always been regarded as one of the substantial citizens of the town. He has one daughter, the wife of Charles Walling. David Dennis was an early settler of South Bradford. He cleared the farm on which he lived & died, & the first years were attended with many hardships. Several children survive him, one daughter the wife of James Gilmore & one the wife of Dewitt Havens. Another the widow of Levi Feagles lives in the Village of Bradford. Daniel Taylor in an early day came with sack, kettle & axe on his shoulder & cleared a farm on Oak Hill. He assisted in laying out the road from Sonora to Mead Creek, which leads to [29] Coopers Plains, by way of South Bradford. The first tax paid on his land, one of his older sons walked twelve miles to work, & get $1.50 to pay this tax. The first wheat he raised, was drawn to Penn Yan, twenty five miles & sold for "three & six pence" per bushel. When we of this generation talk of "hard times" & "oppression" we can just sit down & consider all our blessings, compared to a century ago, & then realize how much we have to be thankful for. Asa Walling was born in N. Jersey in 1810, & came to Oak Hill in 1845. He bought the farm Rumsey Miller cleared, of 200 acres, on which he spent the remainder of his life, making great improvements about him. His three sons are [30] industrious farmers, owning farms near the old house. His only daughter, the wife of Frank Havens, owns the Homestead. It would be wuite impossible to mention all the good people of our town, who have "labored & borne the heat of the day" in clearing improving & cultivating our now abundantly productive lands. Suffice to say that nature has given us the most beautiful scenery in the world, & a soil for raising every possible article of food & clothing, necessary, to use [?] comfort of body, if not of mind. We do not mean all that people buy in these days, but one could be comfortable on just what is produced inside this town. The person living here now, cannot [31] remember when the common articles of food have ever been shipped into the town, but the supply going out of just this little community, to all parts of the world, is remarkable.

Another feature of our town. Every one of the families herein mentioned, have numerous representatives still living in Bradford, who have progressed with the age, & even if they have other financial interests outside, & perhaps homes in other States, they keep a hold on their old native town, & often come back to "dear old Bradford," for visits, or to spend their "comfortable" day. The population of our village is only about 300, but we have three Churches well supported, [32] three dry-goods stores, one furniture store, one hardware, one grocery & one Hotel which affords first-class meals & neat lodging. A grist-mill, saw mill, blacksmith shops & barber-shop. Our Union School building, recently built cost ---- & we are soon to have a fine iron bridge span the Creek where Fred Bartles first started his raft for Baltimore one hundred years ago. We have ardent hopes for an Electric R. R. which will be quite an advance for the Century. Our carriage roads are another great feature of the progress of our town. We have as good roads for the bicycle rider as any in the State. The lake near here now called Lamoka & its outlet which passes through our village, still abound with a variety of fish, & are sought after by numerous fisherman.

[33-35]

[36] In the Baptist Church, was Elder Ketchum who rode miles, & held services at all hours to accommodate the people, & in the Episcopal Church was Rev Wm Atwill, who was untireing in his energy, to hold services, visit everybody, & help himself in the way of gardening &c. He was Rector here three different times & was the source of much good, both in the Church & our "Little Academy." Later on the Methodist Church was built through the hard work of Mrs Stephen Garmon & Brother Davis.

[36b] In connection with our Church work there are several, who deserve mention for untiring labor in conducting the services of their different denominations.